

REQUEST FOR INITIAL PROPOSALS

Smart Growth Starter Kits (SGSTART-03)

OVERVIEW

EPA's Development, Community and Environment Division is seeking proposals for the development of new outreach tools for educating local governmental decision-makers, professional groups, and other interested parties about smart growth. Decisions about new development and redevelopment are made by various stakeholders and decision-makers, largely at the local level. An increasing number of individuals and organizations realize the benefits of smart growth and want to take the steps towards implementing it. Outreach and education are essential components of any local effort to make positive changes in development patterns. A growing number of local governmental decision-makers, professional groups, and other interested parties are seeking information – both general and customized to their local situation -- to help explain the principles and benefits of smart growth to others. This information must be accurate, compelling, easily accessible and widely distributed in order for it to help support constructive change.

EPA is seeking proposals for developing smart growth “starter kits” and related information products targeted to the needs of specific groups. These kits would provide both general smart growth information and more specific customized information directly addressing more targeted issues (e.g., air and water quality, transportation, affordable housing, brownfields redevelopment – see the section on “Eligible Activities” for further specifics). The more targeted issues in a proposal should reflect the applicant's constituency, audience or areas of particular expertise. These starter kits might be packaged in many different ways. Examples include: compact disks (CDs) or digital versatile disks (DVDs); written, audio, video or print presentation materials; publication inserts; case studies; and/or websites targeted to the needs of specific users.

Eligible organizations are invited to submit proposals to create and disseminate these types of materials to the audiences with whom they work.

BACKGROUND

U.S. EPA's Development, Community and Environment Division (Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation) focuses on smart growth issues of regional and national significance. Smart growth development practices support national environmental goals by protecting sensitive habitats and watersheds, minimizing water quality impacts from development, reducing air emissions by increasing transportation choices and reducing heat island effects, and encouraging cleanup and sustainable redevelopment of Brownfields.

Smart growth is development that serves the economy, the community, public health and the environment. Smart growth is often characterized by a common set of development principles:

1. Mix land uses
2. Take advantage of compact building design
3. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
4. Create walkable neighborhoods
5. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
6. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas
7. Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities
8. Provide a variety of transportation choices
9. Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost-effective
10. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions

WHO IS ELIGIBLE

Eligible applicants include (1) incorporated nonprofit (or not for profit) agencies, institutions, and organizations incorporated or domiciled in the United States, and (2) public (state, county, regional or local) agencies, institutions and organizations. Applicants must be located in, and project activities must be conducted within, the United States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, or a territory or possession of the United States. Nonprofit organizations described in section 501 (c) (4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in The Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible to apply. For profit organizations are not eligible to apply.

ACTIVITIES ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

EPA is seeking proposals which include: 1) preparation of customized smart growth outreach products; 2) lists of resources and materials which would be used to develop proposed products; (3) description of technical capabilities required to prepare proposed products and how the applicant will meet those requirements; and 4) descriptions of distribution plans and specific audiences for each product.

All proposals must at a minimum include a “starter kit” CD. This CD should serve as an introduction to the topic of smart growth, including the best available general and issue-specific products. The CD should include an interface that easily guides users to the information they need regardless of their background or level of knowledge on smart growth issues.

The CD should have at least two sections. The first section should focus on general information about smart growth. This section should include at least 20 resources representing the best available sources of information in the field of smart growth. Proposals should include specific information, e.g., titles of publications, presentations, fact sheets or other materials, that would be included in this section of the CD.

The second section should have at least four sub-areas, each relating to a specific issue related to smart growth. Issue areas might include, but are not limited to: air and water quality, brownfields redevelopment, transportation and travel, housing affordability, fiscal impacts, design, infrastructure requirements, zoning and codes, and other areas. Applicants are required to include information on at least four sub-areas but are encouraged to include more sub-areas as their expertise and resources allow. Each proposed sub-area should include at least 10 different materials representing the best available sources of information in the sub-area field. Proposals should include specific information, e.g., titles of publications, presentations, fact sheets or other materials, that would be included in each sub-area of the CD. Applicants should list which specific sub-areas will be included on the CD. For example, in addition to providing titles of specific information on general smart growth issues, an applicant may include titles of materials related to: (1) development patterns and water quality, (2) brownfields and infill redevelopment; (3) travel and transportation; and (4) zoning and codes.

Other types of products which might be proposed *in addition* to a “starter kit” CD might include but are not limited to: publication inserts, customizable presentations, speaking points, slide shows, case studies, websites, and/or video tapes. Applicants should fully describe the technical approach and content of each proposed product.

The lists of materials to be used to develop each product should convey the applicant’s broad understanding of the many influences on, and effects of development patterns. The lists should include both general and specific resources on smart growth, as appropriate. The types of resources may include but are not limited to, previously published reports and fact sheets (in Adobe ® PDF or other formats), presentations, audio and video recordings, and links to websites. EPA will be able to grant permission for use of any EPA materials selected for inclusion; applicants will need to obtain permission for including any other copyrighted materials. All materials in electronic format must comply with requirements on accessibility found in Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act – see <http://www.section508.gov/> for more information.

The proposal must include a description of how the applicant will create the proposed products. This discussion should address, but not be limited to, the degree to which the applicant uses in-house or

outside resources with specific technical capabilities to produce starter kit CDs and other proposed products. These capabilities include, but are not limited to, creation of the CD/user interface, graphical, navigation, and other production-quality elements. Applicants should specifically describe experience with other relevant outreach and education work such as starter kits and the production resources necessary to create them.

Finally, the proposal should include specific information on plans for the distribution of starter kits and other proposed products (if any). Applicants that are membership-based organizations should provide details on strategies for making the products available to members and, if applicable, to others outside the organization. If applicants have other significant distribution capabilities or strategies, they should provide details on those, the audiences reached and the relevance of the audience to smart growth. Potential audiences include, but are not limited to, developers, citizen advisory groups, members of planning or other advisory or decision-making commissions, elected officials, resource officials, infrastructure agency representatives, and/or municipal finance officials.

Applicants should commit to distributing at least 1000 copies of each product, and to supplying EPA with 50 copies of each product.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Proposals must be received by EPA through the mail or by hand delivery (e.g., via courier, UPS, or Federal Express) no later than 5pm East Coast time Tuesday April 29th, 2003. Applicants must submit an original and 4 copies of their proposal package. Fax and e-mail submissions will not be accepted. Proposals received after the due date will not be considered. Please see the sections on "Proposal Contents" and "Where to Get More Information" for important additional details.

Following selection, applicants will be required to submit a formal request for funding assistance (i.e., federal form SF 424 and associated documentation) and a detailed workplan. These items should not be provided with the initial proposal. Applicants should be aware that there will be a very quick turnaround required if they are asked to submit a formal request for funding assistance (i.e., within four weeks or less after contacted by EPA after the initial selection process).

All applicants should be aware that formal requests for assistance may be subject to intergovernmental review under Executive Order 12372, *Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs*. Both proposals and formal requests for funding are also subject to the Freedom of Information Act. This means that anyone can request, and receive, copies of them. Applicants should clearly mark information they consider confidential and EPA will make final confidentiality decisions in accordance with agency regulations (40 CFR part 2, subpart B.).

PROPOSAL CONTENTS

Proposals must include a cover letter, summary information page, project description, budget, and documentation of qualifications. Project descriptions should not exceed 10 pages (see below for additional details). The following format is required:

1. Cover letter (does not count against page limit)

The cover letter used to submit your proposal must be signed by an official with the authority to commit your organization to the project and should be written on your organization's official letterhead.

2. Summary Information Page (does not count against page limit)

The summary information page should be one-page long and include the following information:

- the title and number of this Request for Initial Proposals (i.e., Smart Growth Starter Kits, SGSTART-03)
- project title and location
- applicant name, address, telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail address
- name and title of project contact (including how to reach if different from above)
- type of applicant organization (e.g. nonprofit, local government, state government, etc.)

- summary budget information (amount requested from EPA; amount and source of any matching funds)
- 5 to 10 line abstract of proposal

3. Project Description (no longer than 10 page sides)

The project description must provide a concise overview of the project and include a preliminary workplan outlining the project's major tasks, products, and timetable. The narrative must also address how the proposal meets the selection criteria. If other project partners or funding sources are involved, their role and contribution must be defined. In reviewing the project description, reviewers will not consider any pages over the 10 page limit. The project description must be no longer than five pages double sided, or 10 pages single sided, must use no smaller than 10 point type and should have page margins all-around of at least one inch.

4. Budget (does not count against page limit)

The project budget should include personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual, and other. If not self-evident, entries under each category should be explained in the budget itself or in the project description.

5. Documentation of Qualifications (does not count against page limit)

The applicant must include short bios of all principal staff who will have a major role in the project. Bios must specifically address each individual's experience with smart growth issues and their areas of technical expertise related to product production (e.g., CD's, websites, etc.)

BUDGET REQUEST AND SCOPE OF ACTIVITIES

EPA expects to have approximately \$20-\$30K available for proposals under this RFIP for this funding cycle; this is subject to availability of funding within the agency's final FY 03 budget. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit proposals for first-year activities for approximately \$20-30K or less. Final grants may be negotiated for budget and project periods of up to three years, with funding for future years dependent on funding availability, agency priorities and applicant performance. Applicants should provide detailed descriptions of the activities proposed for the first-year under this competition, as well as a description of what follow-up activities would be conducted in subsequent years if additional funding is available. A ceiling of approximately \$100K for a three year agreement is suggested. EPA expects to award approximately one assistance agreement under this RFIP.

There are no match or cost-sharing requirements. However the degree to which the project budget effectively uses EPA funds and/or leverages matching funds will be considered as an evaluation criterion. Matching funds can include cash or in-kind contributions. Any dollars counted towards a match must be for costs that EPA can fund. Allowable costs for nonprofit organizations are defined in OMB circular A-122; allowable costs for public entities are defined in OMB circular A-87.

SELECTION CRITERIA

A proposal must meet the following threshold criteria to be considered:

Threshold Criterion 1: Smart Growth Focus

The proposal must embody, result in, or encourage smart growth. The proposal must focus on the issues, subjects, and activities targeted by this RFIP and explained in the "Overview," "Background" and "Activities Eligible for Funding" sections. The proposal must clearly demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the smart growth issues addressed by the project, and the applicant must clearly demonstrate expertise in smart growth issues. EPA will use the smart growth definition outlined in the background section to apply this criterion.

Threshold Criterion 2: Allowable Activities

The project must consist of activities authorized under one or more of the following EPA grant authorities: Clean Air Act section 103 (b)(3); Clean Water Act section 104 (b) (3); Solid Waste Disposal Act section 8001, as amended; Toxic Substances Control Act section 10; Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and

Rodenticide Act section 20, as supplemented by P.L.106-74; and Safe Drinking Water Act sections 1442 (a) and (c). Most of the statutes authorize grants for research, investigations, experiments, training, demonstrations, surveys and studies. The project activities must advance the state of knowledge or transfer information. The term "demonstrations" can encompass the first instance of the pollution control or prevention technique, or an innovative application of a previously used method. The term "research" may include the application of established practices when they contribute to learning about an environmental concept or problem.

Threshold Criterion 3: Environmental Focus

In order to be funded, the project's general focus must be one that is specified in the statutes listed above. For most of the statutes, a project must address the causes, effects, extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of air, water, or solid/hazardous waste pollution, or, in the case of grants under the Toxic Substances Control Act or the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act, to "carrying out the purposes of the Act." The overarching focus must be on the statutory purpose of the applicable grant authority, in most cases "to prevent or control pollution." In light of this, proposals relating to topics which are sometimes included within the term "environment" such as recreation, conservation, restoration, or habitat protection should describe the relationship of these topics to the statutorily required purpose of pollution prevention and/or control.

Threshold Criterion 4: Serve a Public Purpose

Projects should be of primary benefit to the applicant organization and the public at large. Proposed projects should clearly and directly support the applicant organization's overall mission and long-term goals. The threshold criteria will be applied on a pass/fail basis. Proposals which fail any one of the threshold criteria will not be considered further.

Evaluation factors:

If a proposal meets the threshold criteria, it will then be evaluated against the following factors:

1. Potential impact of the project and likelihood of success.
2. Degree to which the applicant demonstrates expertise and experience in smart growth, both in general and in depth on the specific issues to be featured in the proposed products.
3. Degree to which applicant demonstrates ability to effectively distribute materials to targeted audiences specified in applicant's proposal.
4. Degree to which the proposing organization is an appropriate representative for the issue addressed in the assistance agreement, is likely to be viewed as an authority on the subject, or is partnering with an organization that meets these requirements.
5. Degree to which the project budget effectively uses EPA funds and/or leverages matching funds.
6. Degree to which applicant demonstrates access to in-house or outside resources with the technical capabilities to produce starter kits with professional interface, graphical, navigation, and other production-quality elements.
7. Degree to which the proposed content of starter kit CD and any other products includes both a broad range of existing excellent general materials on smart growth as well as a selection of the best available materials on specific subjects (such as brownfield redevelopment, affordable housing, natural resource impacts, community quality of life, design, economics and fiscal impacts, public health, transportation, air and water quality, infrastructure requirements, zoning and codes, and related areas as appropriate).

Proposals will be scored high, medium or low against each of the evaluation factors using a numerical

scale of 1 through 5. Factors 1, 2, 6, and 7 will be given higher weight than the other factors.

OTHER FACTORS

EPA will carefully consider the applicant's past performance administering federal financial assistance and carrying out projects supported by EPA and other federal agencies. This may include the results of audits conducted by EPA's Office of Inspector General, other federal agencies, or state, local or tribal oversight entities. Applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss their performance history in their proposals and to provide contacts for EPA to obtain additional information. In making final selections, factors such as overall excellence, geographic diversity, project diversity, and applicant diversity (i.e., type of organization) may also be considered.

Any disputes regarding funding decisions will be resolved in accordance with 40 CFR Part 30 or 31, depending on the applicant. EPA reserves the right to reject all applications and make no awards.

AWARD MECHANISM

This solicitation falls under Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance No. 66.611, Environmental Policy and Innovation Grants, authorized under Delegation of Authority I-47.

EPA expects to use new cooperative agreements to fund approved projects. Cooperative agreements entail substantial federal involvement in the project. Such involvement may include EPA review and approval of project scope and phases; EPA participation in and collaboration on, various phases of the work; EPA review of all draft and final products; regular e-mail, phone, and conference calls; and/or EPA involvement in selection of key recipient personnel.

WHERE AND WHEN TO APPLY

You must submit one original and 4 copies of your full proposal (your full proposal includes the cover letter, summary information page, project description, budget and documentation of qualifications as described under the section entitled "Proposal Contents"). Please note that the delivery address varies depending on whether you are mailing your proposal or arranging for hand delivery.

If you are sending your proposal via hand delivery (e.g., Federal Express, Courier, UPS), send it to:

Deloris Swann
Development, Community and Environment Division
Office of Policy, Economics, and Innovation
U. S. Environmental Protection Agency
1301 Constitution Avenue N.W.
EPA West, Room 1408 C
Washington, D.C. 20004

If you are mailing your proposal, send it to:

Deloris Swann
Development, Community and Environment Division
Office of Policy, Economics, and Innovation
U. S. Environmental Protection Agency
Mail code 1808T
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, DC 20004

Please also note that there may be substantial delays in mail service to EPA, due to heightened security requirements. Proposals must be received by EPA by 5pm east coast time Tuesday April 29th, 2003. No late proposals will be accepted. No fax or e-mail submissions will be accepted. Postmarks or meters will not be considered sufficient documentation of on-time delivery.

WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

Applicants with questions about this solicitation should contact:

Christopher V. Forinash
Development, Community and Environment Division
Office of Policy, Economics, and Innovation
U. S. Environmental Protection Agency
Phone (202) 566-2842
Email forinash.christopher@epa.gov

Answers to frequently asked questions will be posted on the EPA web site at www.epa.gov/smartgrowth. The only pre-application assistance available under this competition will be related to clarifying the requirements of the RFIP.

AWARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

Recipients will be notified of who received an award through a posting of award recipients on the EPA smart growth website (www.epa.gov/smartgrowth). This information will be posted 30 days after EPA's Grants Administration Division issues a written offer of award to each recipient. Awards are expected to be made sometime in the Fall of 2003.

2/26/03